



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Developments in the Mediterranean Region

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 27, 2011

The United States congratulates the millions of Tunisians who voted October 23 in the first democratic elections to take place in the country. These elections highlight the momentous, historic changes unfolding in the region, beginning with the Arab Spring. Just as so many Tunisian citizens protested peacefully in the streets for human rights and greater economic opportunity, this past Sunday they stood in lines and cast their votes to determine their own future.

We commend the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's robust response to the invitation by transitional authorities in Tunisia to observe the October 23 elections. We note the statement made on October 24 by Riccardo Migliori, Head of the OSCE PA election observation mission, that "the elections were free and observers did not witness any widespread or systematic irregularities."

Although these elections represent a tremendous achievement for Tunisia, the hard work is just beginning. Tunisia must now form an interim government, draft a new constitution, and continue to chart a course that meets the democratic aspirations of all Tunisians.

We also note with optimism that reforms in North Africa continue elsewhere. In Libya, the future holds enormous promise. The Libyan people now have a great responsibility: to build an inclusive and tolerant and democratic Libya.

Now that the fighting in Libya has reached an end, the Transitional National Council (TNC) must turn its attention to the political transition ahead. The United States looks forward to working with the TNC and an empowered transitional government as they prepare the country for its transition to democracy.

We also see a role for the OSCE in the work that lies ahead for Libya and throughout the region. All OSCE participating and Partner States share a compelling interest in seeing the democratic transitions in the region succeed and become models for the next generation of new democracies. We should recognize and support the brave peoples of the Middle East and North Africa who called for and generated these monumental transformations.

The OSCE participating States have a responsibility to share with our Partners the vast range of knowledge and experience accumulated by our organization on how to negotiate the difficult path of democratic transition. We must work together to embrace the opportunity at hand, to give meaning to our Partnership, and to give each other the kind of support that this organization was created to provide. The United States looks to the Vilnius Ministerial to lay the foundation for this kind of support, and we look forward to more frequent joint activities with the Partners, across all three dimensions of security.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.